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FOR NEA/ARP, INL/HSTC, AND G/TIP

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ELAB](#) [KU](#) [TIP](#)

SUBJECT: TIP UPDATE: KUWAIT'S DOMESTIC LABOR AWARENESS
PROGRAM EAGER TO LAUNCH NEW PROGRAMS

REF: A. KUWAIT 312
 [1B.](#) 06 KUWAIT 3741

Classified By: DCM Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[¶1.](#) (SBU) Saad Al-Hajji and Eqbal Mallallah, the Director and Assistant Director of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs' National Project to Raise Awareness of Domestic Workers (the project is also known as "Barirah," after one of the prophet's wife Aisha's female servants), met with PolOff on March 7 and detailed ambitious plans for 2007. The most important project for this year is the establishment of a domestic workers training center. The training center would provide a series of classes in which domestic workers would learn about Kuwaiti social customs, domestic workers' rights and responsibilities under the law, practical skills (such as operating modern household appliances, taking care of the elderly and infirm, etc.), and Arabic. The impetus for the training center is a series of studies undertaken as part of the Barirah Project, which found that miscommunication and a lack of mutual understanding of the roles of the employer and employee are a main source of problems. The training materials will be reviewed by academic specialists, and source country embassies will be asked for input as well. If the center is successful, the Barirah Project will seek to make it mandatory for employers to bring their domestic workers to the classes.

[¶2.](#) (SBU) Al-Hajji and Mallallah acknowledged that the Project had gotten a slow start this year because of bureaucratic difficulties. However, they recently completed a minor reorganization and improved their budgetary process and are confident these changes will enable them to act more effectively in the future. They said their main achievement so far in 2007 was a two-part series on Kuwaiti satellite television highlighting the problems of domestic workers. They reported that their hotline had received many calls from Kuwaitis and other GCC citizens as a result of the programs. They also said the Ministry of Information had given verbal approval to a weekly or bi-weekly program to highlight domestic worker issues, and that they were optimistic official approval would come soon after the current cabinet reshuffle is completed. Additionally, the Project has requested a permit for a short newsletter to be published at regular intervals. Barirah is nearing completion of various informational materials and is working to introduce materials into the educational curricula that will teach humane treatment of domestic workers. Al-Hajji noted that the Ministry of Awqaf has convinced many imams to use their Friday sermons to urge respectful treatment of domestic workers.

[¶3.](#) (C/NF) Comment: One of the main elements of the U.S. action plan for Kuwait to improve its trafficking record has been the establishment of a shelter to protect victims. While the training center would not initially provide all the

services a shelter might, Al-Hajji and Mallallah hope it will eventually also offer legal, medical, and other services that a shelter would provide. A key selling point of the Barirah center is that it will use existing facilities, such as one of the many unused schools in Kuwait. This will eliminate the need to get a parcel of land and building permit from the Municipal Council, which is a source of corruption and bureaucratic delays that some Kuwaiti officials have privately blamed for lack of progress toward a shelter. Another advantage of the training center is that it will be less controversial than a full-blown shelter, but might provide the framework for an institution more akin to the shelter recommended by the USG. End Comment.

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